

... were I don't know them to have really provoked. (Cheering.) I have desired, Sir, therefore, to make no observations at this time than might be necessary to accompany the facts which I conceive requisite to bring before the House, with the view of explaining how I came into this situation, and how it is that my late colleagues are no longer round me. [Hear, hear.] There were two topics growing out of the speech of my Right Honourable friend, upon which he will allow me to make one or two observations, not as I most cordially assure him, in any hostile or unpleasant feeling; but that I may set myself right upon points, touching which he has laboured, I think, under some degree of misunderstanding. My right Honourable friend says, how should it be possible that when I—and I trust, Sir, that the House will excuse me for the painful necessity which compels me to use this monosyllable often (hear, hear) that when I have advanced to the high situation in which I now stand, how should it be possible that, without saying or doing any thing actively and expressly to promote the success of the Catholic Question, my moral existence, nevertheless, in that situation in which I stand by the sanction of my Sovereign, and other contingent results, arising out of it, but for which I am not responsible; that all this—that such a state of things—should not be in itself a great moral advancement and promotion of that question, and that cause? Sir, I cannot deny the truth of the proposition thus intimated, to the extent at which my Right Honourable friend put it; and in that proposition any honourable gentleman who will take the trouble to put the question, and the answer to the question, together, will see that they supply the answer to be given to the taunts of the Honourable Baronet opposite, when he asks, "How do Gentlemen, who have hitherto differed from the Government on the questions of Catholic Emancipation, consent to support it now, when that question has acquired an accession of votes in the new Administration?" I answer, Sir, because they see the Protestant votes in the late Cabinet retiring from the new one, as my Right Honourable friend does; they see, that the very reason which leaves me here, in my present situation—without any interference upon my part to produce such a state of opinions upon this question, in the Government—is the reason that has determined the late Members of that Government to take their places by the side of the Honourable Baronet. [Cheers.] That state of opinions, or the state of things which was thus likely to be produced, might have been a very good reason for advising my Sovereign not to place me here; and I have already shewn the House, that I was prepared, not only to accede to such a determination, but even to anticipate it. But it were a little too much, I think, to say that reason shall be good for my Right Honourable friend to justify his secession from Administration, and not good for me to account for the position in which the new Government I have had to form, is necessarily placed. [Hear, hear.] If my Right Honourable friend thinks that he ought to take the step which has been taken, and that his late colleagues are justified, also, in declining to act with me, why, surely, others are justified upon retirement, in saying that they will support me, because my Right Honourable friend and his colleagues will not. And this consideration will sufficiently explain, I apprehend, Sir, how it is that I am here, and how it is that my Right Honourable friend, and those other of my former colleagues, are now around me. My Right Honourable friend's open and candid defence of his own retreat, however, furnishes a complete reply to all the taunts of the Honourable

Gentlemen opposite, whose support of the new Government will be measured, I apprehend, by the degree in which Catholic Emancipation shall appear to them to be a Cabinet question or not—just as much as the difference between us and my Right Honourable friend will be measured, I trust, by the small degree of difference which has hitherto existed between his view and mine of the general policy of the country. But I am asked—Is the Roman Catholic Question, in point of fact, with the new Government, a Cabinet Question? No. [Loud Cheering.] It stands exactly, Sir, as it did in the year 1812, but in a part of the year 1812, which my Right Honourable friend has not exactly distinguished from another part of that year to which his speech referred. It is very tiresome to refer to books in discussions of this kind, and not being prepared to anticipate the necessity of consulting them on this occasion, I did not bring them down with me; but in consequence of my Right Honourable friend's speech, I have sent for them, and I can now recur to them. My right honourable friend says, that in a debate which took place on the 25th of May, 1812, in assigning my reasons for not joining Lord Liverpool's Government at that time, I stated, that I should be coming into a Cabinet that would smother my own opinions, or that I used expressions, to that effect, and yet, that on the 22d of June of the same year, I brought the Catholic question into this House, and carried it by a great and extraordinary majority. But did nothing, Sir, intervene between the 25th of May and the 22d of June, to cause the change, to which my right honourable friend alludes? Was there no alteration in the condition of the Government, and the feeling of Parliament upon the subject, during this interval? Yes; for on the 25th of May, which was shortly after the death of Mr. Perceval, Lord Liverpool came to me, to propose to me to become a member of Administration. What passed on this subject, Gentlemen will be pleased to remember, was published, together with all the negotiations entered into on that occasion, and having been so recorded, cannot have been since altered, they will perceive, to answer a temporary purpose. It appears here [Mr. Canning was now reading from printed papers], that the first question I asked Lord Liverpool was, whether the opinions and policy of the Government were to be considered altogether unchanged and unalterable, touching the laws affecting the Roman Catholics? Lord Liverpool answered, that his own opinions upon this matter undoubtedly remained unaltered, and he was not aware that those of his colleagues had experienced any change. Now, here Sir, I pause to ask what was the condition in which the Catholic question stood then? At the period of the unrestricted Regency, Mr. Perceval invited into his government Lord Sidmouth and Lord Castlereagh; and upon the very first debate which took place upon this question in the House after that junction, Mr. Perceval and Lord Castlereagh both declared themselves, in the course of the discussion, inimical to the agitation of the question at that opportunity. Lord Castlereagh said—(the House will recollect that it was upon Mr. Grattan's motion, in 1812)—"with respect to the vote I shall give to-night, my Right Honourable friend has clearly stated that the Cabinet intimates an opinion, that the propriety of further concessions to the Catholics, could not now be agitated, nor any enquiry gone into at present on the subject of disabilities affecting his Majesty's Roman Catholic subjects in Ireland, with advantage to the Empire, or due regard to the welfare of the community at large." Why, then, Sir, the footing

upon which the Cabinet stood in respect to the Catholic question, was one of general resistance to it, and in the Government itself there was a joint determination to act upon that authority. It was in this state of things that on the 25th May, 1812, I refused to join in Lord Liverpool's arrangements, and gave him my reasons for not doing so, which were involved in that determination on that part of the Administration and the Cabinet. But what happened in the mean time, between May the 22d and June 27th? Why, that in June Lord Castlereagh came down to this House, and being questioned by the hon. Mr. Spencer Stanhope, whom many gentlemen round me will remember, I believe, as to the footing on which the Catholic question was then to stand (this was after the death of Mr. Perceval) Lord Castlereagh said "it was so far changed, that whereas, up to that period, the Cabinet, though comprising members who were actuated by different opinions on the subject, had yet all concurred in hostile resistance to it; they were now not only to think, but to vote, if any thought proper, in pursuance of this opinion." Then I contend, Sir, that between these two periods, of which the Right Honourable gent. has spoken, the Cabinet itself was changed in its character, as regarded this question. It was changed, by being put upon that independent footing, on which my Right hon. friend and myself have voted in it together, for so many years. Did this altered condition of circumstances effect no change in the condition of the Catholic question? Assuredly, it did; and I well recollect its being hailed by Mr. Grattan, and many others, who voted with him, as a most important accession to that cause, and the proof of the fact is, that my motion was carried by a triumphant majority. Now I think I have sufficiently explained the difference which had arisen between the two periods in question, as to this important subject, and as to my views of it, I have not the vanity to believe, that the speech to which the Right Honourable gent. refers, procured that result of which I have spoken; but some days afterwards I find that Mr. S. Stanhope rose to put a question to the noble Lord—"he wished to know if it was intended, on the part of the present Ministers, that the same policy, in every respect, should be observed by them, in reference to the Catholic question, which had been observed under the Administration of the late Right hon. gent.?" Lord Castlereagh replied, that he felt some difficulty in answering the question of the hon. gent. literally, the arrangements for the new Ministry not having yet been fully completed. But as to the spirit of the question he thought he could be more satisfactory. He could say this, from his knowledge of those employed in forming that Administration, that, generally, these sentiments remained the same. Upon a former occasion, they had thought, inclusive even of those who were favorable to the measure, that the present was not the time for discussing that question, and in still thinking so, that recent decisions in Parliament formed a leading consideration in influencing the adoption of that opinion. The sense of Parliament having been, at least for the present, definitively pronounced, they thought that any immediate revived discussion would only create irritation without being productive of any thing useful. He was aware, however, of the growing change in favor of those claims; and, in submission to that change, and the real sentiments of certain Members of the Government, it had been resolved on as a principle, that the discussion of this question should be left free from all interference, on the part of Government, and that every Member of that Government should be left to the free and unbiass-

ed suggestions of his own conscientious direction." Here, then, it was evident that a complete change was at that time considered to have occurred between the 25th May and 10th June, 1812, in the opinions of the Government. At the former period the Cabinet were all united in its resistance to the Catholic question; at the latter it was to be left to the free and unbiassed discussion of all or any of the Members of the Cabinet. But to come to the present condition of that question, I say again it remains in this Government precisely as it has been since repeatedly described by myself; in short as it was described to be in 1826, in a debate which took place in the month of March, upon the state of Ireland; and in the very last debate, in the last session of Parliament, in the same year upon Catholic Emancipation. On this head I will only add that I hold myself as perfectly at liberty to propound in the Cabinet the Roman Catholic Question, as I feel myself free to propound any other question affecting the national interests, assuming to myself only the liberty of bringing it forward at such times as my own judgment, and the exercise of my own discretion, and present circumstances, shall direct me. (Cheers.) Such was the footing upon which this question stood when I was the Colleague of my Right hon. friend; and on that same footing it stands now. Let it be observed, therefore, by those with whom I have formerly acted, and from whose objections on this occasion I do not shrink, however the acknowledgment I have made may be attempted to be converted into matter of opposition to us, that, with those who formed the present Cabinet, and some whom formed part of the last, the Catholic Question now stands on the same ground as it stood on under Lord Liverpool's Government. That is a question which each Member of the Government is at liberty, if he pleases, to bring forward in the Cabinet, or to propound to Parliament; and if any Member of the Government shall so bring it forward in either House of Parliament, he is distinctly to state that he does so in his individual capacity only, and not as pledging his Colleagues to his own opinions on the subject. [Hear, hear.] This Sir, is the position of the Catholic Question now; it is the same in which it was placed in the year 1812; it is the same in which it has now stood for fifteen years successively. [Hear, hear.] That it should remain in this state is a fact which I know has been much objected to by many; but if I consider the state of the country at large—the inclination of men's minds upon this matter in England as well as in Ireland—and the infinite difficulties which surround the attempt at present to alter that state—it is, in my judgment, and in my conscience I believe it to be, the only footing upon which it can be at present left; unless there be the views of partisans to be consulted, the accomplishment of whose wishes on the one hand, or whose attempt to stifle free and growing opinions on the other, would in the result, lead to a convulsion in one part or other, of the United Kingdom. (Hear, hear, hear.) Now, Sir, I am not prepared for convulsion in either. [Hear, hear.] I would not raise hopes which I do not see any immediate means of realizing. In making this observation, I am not speaking of the moral accomplishment of those hopes, but of exciting expectations without having good grounds to anticipate their immediate and speedy fulfilment. I remember too well, and but a short memory is required indeed for that purpose, how much has been uttered in the way of complaint in debates of this House upon the Catholic Question, about things being said or done in Ireland. (Concluded on sixth page.)